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We Suggest

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Creber, J. W. Patrick
Sense and Sensitivity
London, England: University of London Press LTD, 1965, pp. 253.

> The great mammals are extinct or enslaved,
> or tranquilized and tagged, then left to wander—
> not widely, for now another species,
> weak in itself, but having words as its weapon and armor,
> swarms everywhere on earth.
> It conquers by force of words,
> and shields each conquest with words,
> and dreams in words of being its own law.[1]

A sincere look at the present-day world does, indeed, uphold the truth of the poet's observation. Man, everywhere, uses his language for conquest, for protection, and for dreams of a better world. What a solemn responsibility is entailed for those who teach about language and its use if men are to become masters, not servants, of the dreams their words help to create! Teachers assume part of this responsibility when they help to ensure that a child's language *is* his own, the outcome of his own perception and imagination, not memorized, or copied, to order.

A main premise of Mr. Creber's book, *Sense and Sensitivity,* is that no aspect of language can be taught in isolation, that, ideally, the relationship between language and experience is very close. He maintains that no dichotomy exists between the interests of the pupil and the interests of the subject. Consideration of words is valuable only in reference to an experience to be communicated. If a pupil is to comprehend or communicate the experience, it "must be relevant, so that he may feel some urge to explore it or share it with others."

In Part One of this book, the author writes about systematic training of the imagination and the emotions. He believes such training is actively conducive to a high level of technical competence with language. In Part Two, he explains principles of technical skills in language, and illustrates them by classroom practices and applications in reading and writing. Principles and methods described here deal with the teaching of English in secondary schools; many apply equally well to elementary school instruction.

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1. Malcolm Cowley, "Here With the Long Grass Rippling," *Saturday Review,* (August 24, 1968), p. 23.

Teachers may make use of varied stimuli to create "a classroom atmosphere of heightened awareness" in which the training of an active sensibility may take place. Approaches outlined in the book direct the child's sensibility toward even familiar scenes and experiences in a way to awaken his appreciation of the world around him, and to enable him to find expression, inside of school, for part of the enthusiasm inherent in his youthful personality. Following the lessons in learning to perceive, growth of consciousness is stimulated in children by helping them to organize their perceptions. They are encouraged to handle a first-hand experience in a more adult way by communicating and understanding its mood through recognition, selection, and emphasis of related details. Next, the writer aims at deepening and broadening children's insights into other people's feelings and behavior. Here, reading literature which extends sympathies of students by subjecting them to experiences involving imaginative cognition goes hand-in-hand with imaginative composition.

For education of the emotions and imagination to be effective, it must include other creative acts than language itself. Creber suggests the dramatic experience as one more way to help students reconcile the reality of the outside world with their own private worlds. Like the arts of language, it may aid them in coming to terms with themselves. In a background which stimulates and nurtures the child's heightened awareness of his environment, of his personal involvement in his world, and of both his real, and his empathic, human relationships, he can relate linguistic skills to each other, and to the whole business of communicating ideas.

In this volume, Creber has postulated that, through training and use of his senses and his sensitivity, man learns to make his language personal and meaningful. In a similar vein, Hayakawa addresses teachers and pupils alike when he says:

> . . . We all tend to go around the world with our eyes shut unless someone opens them for us.
>
> And this eye-opening, then, is the tremendous function that language, in both its scientific and its affective uses, performs. . . . In the light of the subtleties of feeling aroused in us by literature and poetry and drama, every human experience is filled with rich relationships and significance.[2]

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2. S. I. Hayakawa, *Language In Thought And Action,* p. 327. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1964.